The eighth meeting of the New York State Department of Transportation’s (NYSDOT) Kosciuszko Bridge Project Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC) was held on Thursday, May 15, 2003 at Jennings Hall, Brooklyn. (See Attachment A for Attendance List.) The meeting was scheduled to begin Level 1 screening of the Long List of Alternatives.

Helen Neuhaus, Helen Neuhaus & Associates Inc. (HNA), opened the meeting by welcoming newcomers and asking them to introduce themselves. In response to her request for comments on the Minutes of the April 24, 2003 SAC meeting, Gerald Esposito, Brooklyn Community Board (CB) #1, noted that the Minutes did not accurately reflect his remarks regarding drainage concerns. He stated that he had asked if all of the alternatives address drainage issues. If not, this should be incorporated into the screening criteria. Mr. Esposito indicated that his goal was to raise drainage concerns early in the process-- in the schematic, rather than Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), phase--in order to avoid free-falling rainwater from a new structure. He added that the New York City Department of Environmental Protection should address drainage on the ground. Ms. Neuhaus stated that the Minutes would be amended to reflect this change.

Ms. Neuhaus then facilitated a discussion of the follow-up items from the April 24th meeting. She noted that several of these involved revising, distributing and preparing materials for tonight’s meeting. Other items on the list--such as a question from Irene Klementowicz, Concerned Citizens of Greenpoint, regarding the number of businesses using barges on Newtown Creek, and a request from Anthony Nunziato, Queens resident, for visuals of the construction staging areas--will be placed on a long-range follow-up log, which will be reviewed every month by the project team and shared with the SAC on a regular basis.

In response to Mr. Nunziato’s question regarding the height of the Queens-Midtown Tunnel viaduct, Robert Adams, NYSDOT, explained that clearance was reduced from 90 to 83 feet when the viaduct was rehabilitated in the early 1990’s. Mr. Nunziato noted, and Mr. Adams concurred, that rather than actually lowering the viaduct, new steel beams were added below the structure.

Ms. Neuhaus announced that the first meeting of the Kosciuszko Bridge Project’s Inter-Agency Advisory Committee (IAAC) has been scheduled for Tuesday, June 24th at 10 a.m. at the NYSDOT Region 11 Office, Hunter’s Point Plaza, 47-40 21st Street, Long Island City. Noting that Mr. Nunziato and Christine Holowacz, Greenpoint Property Owners, were asked to identify a SAC representative from Queens and Brooklyn, respectively, to serve on the IAAC, Ms. Neuhaus asked if these individuals had been selected. Mr. Nunziato stated that he or Vincent Arcuri, Queens CB #5, will attend the meetings. Ms. Holowacz was not present, but it was thought that she would represent the Brooklyn SAC members. Mr. Adams indicated that a letter will be sent to Ms. Holowacz, asking her to serve or to designate an alternate.
Ms. Neuhaus stated that, at the SAC’s request, all future Committee meetings will be held at Jennings Hall.

Mr. Arcuri reported that the Community Advisor Subcommittee decided to target specific elected officials in its effort to secure funding for an independent advisor. The first letter will be sent from Queens CB #5 to New York State Senator Serphin Maltese, who has access to state transportation funds. He added that CB #5 will ask other community boards to send similar letters.

Ms. Neuhaus reported that outreach, through letters and telephone calls, is continuing to SAC members who have missed several meetings.

Update on Related Projects
Michael Rossmy, Brooklyn Borough President’s Office, announced that the Draft EIS (DEIS) for the Cross Harbor Freight Movement Project is scheduled to be released this July or August.

Referring to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s plan to build a citywide bus depot at Grand Avenue and 47th Street, Steve Bennett, Parsons, reported that the design/build contract is out for bids. Mr. Nunziato remarked that this project is very controversial within the community.

Level 1 Screening
Recap of Screening Criteria
Mr. Bennett opened the discussion with a brief recap of the categories of alternatives that comprise the Long List: No Build, Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation with Auxiliary Lanes, New Bridge, and New Tunnel. He noted that the goal of Level 1 screening is to eliminate the worst alternatives. Referring to the revised screening criteria (see Attachment B), Mr. Bennett stated that Criterion #3: Avoid impacts to adjacent property and community facilities was modified to reflect suggestions made by the SAC at the previous meeting. A summary of the changes is provided below:

- Measure 3-2, which previously addressed both permanent and temporary (construction-period) impacts to commercial and industrial properties, was divided into two measures. Measure 3-2 now refers to the acquisition of property, while the new Measure 3-5 refers to temporary construction impacts.

- The ratings for Measures 3-2 and 3-5 are now based on the number of potentially affected employees, rather than the actual number of businesses. Mr. Bennett stated that aerial maps, with an overlay of each alternative and information about the estimated number of employees per business and impacts to sensitive community areas, will be available for next month’s discussion of Criterion #3. He added that the employee estimates are intentionally conservative, taking into account any possible impacts. In-depth examination of employee impacts will be conducted during the DEIS phase of the study.

In response to a question from Peter King, NYSDOT, Mr. Bennett explained that the estimated number of employees is based on typical employment density for each type of business. Joseph Ruzalski, United Forties Civic Association, asked how much of the Phelps-Dodge property Philip Galasso, Sagres LLC, plans to purchase. Dan Torchio, Sagres LLC, responded that Mr. Galasso plans to buy the entire site.
Measures 3-3 and 3-4, which address permanent and temporary impacts to sensitive community areas, were revised to include percentages with each ranking. Alternatives will be evaluated based on how much closer (i.e. less than 25%, less than 50% or more than 50%) the structure moves to Sergeant Dougherty Park, Calvary Cemetery or residences. Mr. Bennett noted that moving the bridge closer to a residence is more critical than moving it closer to the park or cemetery, and this is reflected in the screening criteria.

In response to a question from Mr. Rossmy, Mr. Bennett acknowledged that the percentages do not correlate with other quantifiable measures such as emissions. He added that air quality studies will be performed for the DEIS. Questioning the use of percentages rather than actual numbers, Mr. Rossmy observed that 50% of 100-150 feet is significantly different than 50% of 50 feet. Mr. Bennett noted that the project team recognizes that residences on Apollo Street, Brooklyn, are considerably closer to the structure than houses on the Queens side of the bridge. He added that although the project team had considered using actual distances, this is not needed at this level of screening, where the goal is only to screen out the worst alternatives.

**Level 1 Screening**

Given the length of time needed to evaluate each alternative measure by measure and the lack of completed maps due to the short timeframe between the April and May SAC meetings, Criteria #1, 2 and 4 were reviewed at this meeting; the more complicated Criterion #3 will be evaluated at the June SAC meeting. Blank screening worksheets were distributed and large-scale boards were used to record results. (See Attachment C for worksheet illustrating screening results recorded at the meeting.) Alternatives were displayed using PowerPoint slides.

Before beginning the screening process, Mr. Bennett explained that the No Build Alternative is the baseline against which all other alternatives are evaluated throughout the EIS process. It therefore automatically advances to Level 2 screening.

Referring to **Criterion #1, Provide 24-hour operation of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) and the long-term use of Newtown Creek as a navigable waterway**, Mr. Bennett explained that it appears first because any alternative that fails this criterion is “fatally flawed” and will be dropped from further consideration. For example, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) would not issue a permit for any alternative that blocks Newtown Creek and impedes navigation. Likewise, an alternative that prevents 24-hour, barrier-free travel on the BQE would be rejected by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Using a pass-fail rating, the alternatives were reviewed for their compliance with Criterion #1. Three Structure Replacement Alternatives (BR-10, BR-11 and BR-12) failed and were eliminated from further consideration.

In response to a question from Anthony Parra, EWVIDCO, Mr. Bennett replied that the USCG requires Newtown Creek to remain navigable both during construction and after. He noted that figures available on the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) web site indicate that movable bridges along Newtown Creek opened for waterborne traffic approximately 600 times in 2002.
Continuing with **Criterion 2: Improve traffic operations and safety in the project corridor**, Mr. Bennett facilitated the screening of the remaining alternatives. A summary of comments and questions raised during the process is provided below:

- Referring to Measure 2-2, Mr. Bennett stated that it is not possible to correct the slope on the existing bridge. However, a new structure would allow for a reduced slope, thereby improving traffic flow and safety. Jay Siegel, Siegel Brothers, observed that there is a dip in the BQE viaduct over the Long Island Expressway (LIE), which requires drivers to climb a hill as they access the Kosciuszko Bridge. Questioning why this dip exists, he noted that the slope would not be as steep if the roadway remained at the same grade for the half-mile leading up to the bridge. Mr. Bennett speculated that the dip allows the BQE and LIE to cross each other and tie in at the ramps.

- Mr. King asked if the USCG has provided feedback regarding clearance levels. Mr. Bennett replied that the agency has indicated that a 90 foot clearance would be acceptable, adding that he is gathering data for a pre-permitting meeting. Mr. Bennett noted that the bridge currently has a clearance of 125 feet with a slope of approximately 4%. A bridge with 90 foot clearance would have a slope of approximately 2%. In response to a question from Mr. Rossmy, Mr. Bennett stated that the roadway is considered flat terrain, as defined in the NYSDOT Highway Design Manual. In response to Mr. Nunziato’s question concerning whether a 90-foot bridge is a definite goal, Mr. Bennett reiterated that nothing is definite at this point. A Newtown Creek navigation study must be conducted, a pre-permitting meeting held, and design plans completed before the USCG would issue a permit.

- Referring to Measure 2-2 as it applies to the tunnel alternatives, Mr. Arcuri noted that a tunnel would require excavation well beneath the creek and tie-ins with the BQE. These factors would result in a significant slope. Mr. Bennett stated that such details as the tunnel profile, tie-ins, slope and the amount of property required will not be determined until Level 2 screening. Other comments related to the tunnel alternatives are provided below:
  - In response to a question from Mr. Parra, Mr. Bennett suggested that at this level of screening, a tunnel still offers the possibility of a reduced slope.
  - Mr. Ruzalski observed that tractor trailers often exceed 13 feet in height and questioned whether the tunnel would be higher than 14 feet in order to accommodate this.
  - Mr. Arcuri noted that ventilation towers and utilities would need to be factored in, when determining the height of the tunnel.
  - In response to questions from Gus Amato, United Forties Civic Association, regarding the depth of excavation, Mr. Bennett indicated that the creek is approximately 20 feet deep in the vicinity of the existing bridge; a minimum of five feet beneath that depth and the top of the tunnel would be required. Mr. Arcuri expressed his view that an additional 10-15 feet below the surface would be needed. It was noted that the tunnel would not hit bedrock.

Before Mr. Bennett continued with **Criterion 4: Reduce diversion of traffic from the highway onto local streets, both during construction and long-term**, Dick Beers, FHWA, pointed out that the Rehabilitation Alternatives (RH-1, RH-2 and RH-3) received poor ratings (empty circles) for all three measures under Criterion #2. Therefore, according to the screening guidelines, they should be
eliminated from further consideration. Mr. Bennett agreed and proceeded to screen the remaining alternatives based on Criterion #4. None of the alternatives were eliminated during this step.

After Mr. Ruzalski commended Mr. Bennett for his facilitation of this portion of the screening process, SAC members and guests concurred with a round of applause.

Other questions raised during the meeting included the following:

Barbara Mihelic, Noble Street Block Association, asked if the proposed dredging of Newtown Creek would be extensive enough to allow the passage of ships with deeper drafts. Mr. Bennett replied that the reason for the dredging is to remove hazardous materials. However, such dredging may deepen the channel; this will be taken into account during the Newtown Creek navigation study.

In response to a question from Mr. Ruzalski, Mr. Bennett answered that a pedestrian walkway has been requested and will be considered. He added that the walkway will be subjected to a cost-benefit analysis.

Other Business
Teresa Toro, New York State Senator Martin Malave Dilan’s Office, announced that NYCDOT is conducting an online survey of truck routes in New York City neighborhoods. She encouraged everyone to complete the survey and lobby NYCDOT to extend the deadline for responses.

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, June 19th at 6:30 P.M. at Jennings Hall, 260 Powers Street, Brooklyn.**

Follow-Up Items
1. Amend minutes of April 24, 2003 SAC meeting to reflect changes proposed by Mr. Esposito. Responsibility: HNA.
2. Send letter of invitation to Christine Holowacz asking her to serve on the IAAC or to designate an alternate. Responsibility: NYSDOT.